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*for the*  
*12 Dec 72*

*Annex*

IV. The Watch Committee and NIC Reporting Structure

Nature of the Committee

The Watch Committee was formed in January 1951, shortly after the Chinese intervened in Korea. It replaced several more limited warning groups in the separate agencies. The National Indications Center (NIC) was set up as its executive staff in 1954. The goal was to create one committee/center where warning information would come together for quick analysis.

CIA by charter provides the Chairman of the Watch Committee. Over the years this position has always been filled by a high-ranking CIA official, either by the Deputy Director, or one of the top assistants to the Director. Currently the Acting Chairman is Richard Lehman, Director of Current Intelligence (the head of OCI). He replaced Gen. Robert Cushman a year ago at the head of the Committee.

The Committee working membership, at roughly the Colonel level, is two members each from CIA, DIA, NSA, and State, and one each from the FBI and the AEC. The Director NIC has a full voice at the table, and NIC staffers as well as officers from the service intelligence organizations attend the meetings as observers.

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The NIC

The National Indications Center (NIC) itself is a small complex located at 1E821 in the Pentagon. Its area houses the large conference room used by the Watch Committee, offices for use of the analytical staff, and a Watch Center manned 24-hours.

The NIC has a small interagency staff. There are approximately 30 people, including 15 from DIA (including Army and Air but no Navy rep), 9 from CIA and 4 from NSA, but there are none from State. Including the CIA civilian Director and DIA Deputy (a Colonel), there are 12 analytical personnel. Ten people are assigned to the 24-hour Watch function.

The equipment consists of secure grey phone and KY-3 ("green") connections, wire services, a pneumatic tube to the DIA (the relay point at the Pentagon for much of NIC's traffic), and a COINS outlet. Other equipment such as LDX, can be used at the NMCC or DIA-NMIC.

The primary function of the analytical staff is to review indications intelligence and prepare the draft Watch Report. The staff also carries out some research on warning topics.

The NIC also produces, and disseminates widely in the warning community, the Watch Officers' Notes (WONS),

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a daily collection of warning intelligence items. Most of these items are reproduced in the WONS without further NIC comment.

The Reporting Cycle

The Watch Committee meets regularly on Wednesday mornings, and special meetings are called periodically--at any time of day or night--to discuss urgent items of warning intelligence.

The reporting cycle is kicked off on Fridays by the NIC, which sends out a Preliminary Agenda calling attention to various developments of possible interest for the next week's report. This agenda is circulated widely within USIB agencies, and DIA cables it to certain field commands and warning centers.

The agencies turn in their contributions to NIC on Monday, and NIC drafts the report and circulates it by Tuesday noon. The agencies grey-phone their changes to NIC late Tuesday.

Wednesday morning the Committee meets at NIC and reviews the text and debates the recommended changes. It may also discuss other warning items which are not included in the report.

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Thursday the Watch Report is reviewed as the first order of business of the meeting of USIB. If USIB is not meeting, the report is coordinated telephonically. This may take some anguished hours, because USIB principals have to be tracked down in order to get their personal agreement.

1 The final version of the report is cabled to some field stations by CIA and to various major commands by DIA, and disseminated in Washington Friday morning. A

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The Product

In Washington the report is circulated to policy level officials within the USIB agencies and the parent organizations. Its warning message, by nature of the present world situation, is obviously often a negative, "all-clear" signal, so the report is probably not in most cases shown to the highest policy level officials.

On some recent occasions, however, the report has been shown to the Secretary of State.

In any case, the warning message does require the reading and concurrence of the principals of USIB--the

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chiefs of the various intelligence agencies. This system therefore at the very least assures that the report, bland as it may often appear, at least tells the intelligence chiefs that the USIB's Watch Committee has once again reviewed intelligence bearing on a potential surprise military attack on the US and intelligence concerning broader enemy strategy in any ongoing fighting which involves US troops.

In addition, the system always provides the option to USIB member agencies of calling a special meeting of the Committee to review some possibly alarming indicator. In the days of Colder War, these special meetings were held at least several times a year; none have taken place since 1970.

The report seems to be well-received by certain field elements as a good capsulized regular roundup of potentially scarey situations.

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also tend to be generally appreciative of the report as a uniquely USIB community weekly report, and often are quick to note nuances in the tone of the reporting.

Generally the bland quality of the report is one of its greatest weaknesses. This invariably results

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from the need to fall back on compromise language to  
paper over major differences between agency "positions."  
There can be footnotes but there usually are not.



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